

Mass Fatalities Family Assistance and Mental Health

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Family Assistance

- ✓ Provision of psychological support while obtaining information to identify the missing and dead victims
- ✓ Authority - *Responsibility/Organization*
- ✓ Planning - *Key Stakeholders*
- ✓ Response - *Who, How, Where and When?*
- ✓ Recovery - *Identification of Needs and Resources*

Family Assistance Challenges

- ✓ Overwhelming
- ✓ Operations/Logistics
- ✓ Family/Community Expectations
- ✓ Political Pressure



What makes Family Assistance “Overwhelming”?

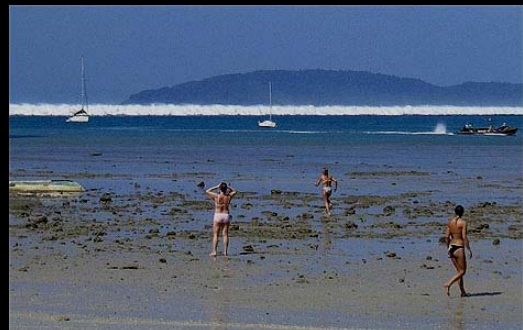
- ✓ Fear and Trauma
- ✓ Lack of Organizational Structure
- ✓ Lack of Planning
- ✓ Lack of Training and Exercise

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Mental-Behavioral Health Responses to Overwhelming Fear



- ✓ The nervous system can be overwhelmed by fear and the “thinking brain” can be bypassed by survival circuitry.
- ✓ The response of *fight, flight or freeze* is determined by the autonomic nervous system.



Behavioral Health Reactions: Fear, Fight, Flight, and Freeze



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Freeze - Immobility



Family Assistance Challenges: Operations

- ✓ Command Structure
- ✓ Connection with Morgue Operations
- ✓ Mental Health/Spiritual Care/Death Care Coordination
- ✓ Security
- ✓ Meals
- ✓ Childcare
- ✓ Medical Care



Family Assistance Challenges: Logistics

- ✓ Facilities
- ✓ Personnel
 - ✓ Source - Surge Capacity
 - ✓ Credentials
 - ✓ Volunteer Management
- ✓ Supplies
- ✓ Transportation

Challenges: Affected Families and Community

- ✓ Coordination with Local Hospitals
- ✓ Mandated Family Briefings
- ✓ Media Intrusiveness
- ✓ Human Remains Recovery Process
- ✓ Ante mortem Data Collection
- ✓ Family Dynamics

Catastrophic Infectious Disease: Family Assistance Unique Challenges

- ✓ Generally intact bodies
- ✓ Generally known identities
- ✓ Ongoing event with potential for multiple, sequential deaths in families

Unique Family Assistance Challenges with Infectious Disease

- ✓ Delayed recovery of bodies
- ✓ Limited gatherings (for funerals)
- ✓ Potential for temporary interment and mass burials



Family Assistance and Mental Health

- ✓ Critical Components of Mass Fatality Planning and Response
- ✓ Determine "Ownership"
- ✓ Establish Command Structure
- ✓ Exercise Plans
- ✓ Train Personnel

Questions?

Thank you
Lisa

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